Delta II Launch Stopped Due to Engine Ignition Failure

The Boeing [NYSE: BA] Delta launch team has determined this morning's launch attempt was stopped when one of the vehicle's two vernier engines on the first stage failed to ignite.

The Boeing Delta II was scheduled to launch the Advanced Research and Global Observation Satellite for the U.S. Air Force at 2:44 a.m. PST today.

The first stage of a Delta II has a main engine and two vernier engines. Vernier engines are small rocket motors that allow the vehicle to be steered during flight. During the engine start sequence, the two vernier engines are required to ignite prior to ignition of the main engine. The main engine and two vernier engines were automatically shut down at approximately T-0 when it was detected that one of the vernier engines had failed to ignite.

There have been four other instances of Delta II rockets experiencing on-pad aborts during the engine start sequence. Historically it has taken the launch team approximately 10 days to return the vehicle to launch status.

While the Delta team is investigating the incident, processing of another Delta II scheduled to launch NASA's STARDUST spacecraft from Cape Canaveral Air Station, Fla., will continue. At the same time, the team looking into the aborted launch will evaluate cause and determine if there will be any impact to the STARDUST launch schedule.

The ARGOS launch has two NASA-sponsored secondary payloads, the Ørsted and SUNSAT. The scientific satellites will be the first launched by Denmark and South Africa, respectively. There was no impact to any of the spacecraft systems as a result of the on-pad abort of the launch.

Delta II ARGOS Media Kit

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